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1896

# Correspondence      ②      ②

CONNECTED WITH THE RESIGNATION OF

REV. JAMES S. DENNIS, D.D.,

FROM HIS OFFICIAL CONNECTION  
AS A MISSIONARY IN SYRIA WITH

②      ②      The Board of Foreign Missions  
of the Presbyterian Church.

THIS CORRESPONDENCE    ②    ②    ②

HAS BEEN PRINTED FOR PRIVATE DISTRIBUTION AMONG PERSONAL  
FRIENDS, IN ORDER THAT THE PRECISE MEANING OF AN ACTION  
WHICH, WITHOUT EXPLANATION, MIGHT BE EASILY MISUNDER-  
STOOD, SHOULD BE MADE KNOWN TO THEM.

COPY OF LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE .. ..  
.. .. .. BOARD OF FOREIGN MISSIONS.

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NEW YORK CITY, *January 9th, 1892.*

**To the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.**

Dear Brethren :—In view of the uncertain duration of my absence from Syria, made necessary by the responsibilities placed upon me as a trustee of my father's estate, and also for other providential reasons, I feel constrained to request the Board to accept my resignation as one of its regularly appointed missionaries entitled to compensation and bound by corresponding obligations of service. In tendering this resignation it is not my intention to give up all purpose of future missionary labor in Syria, as it is my hope and expectation to return there when the way seems open to do so, and give my services as a

voluntary offering in the interest of the work now carried on in that field under the auspices of this Board. If I am permitted to do this I should esteem it a privilege to be allowed to retain an honorary connection with the Board, although I should not expect to receive any financial support or to claim the right to vote in the Mission councils.

I feel confident, judging from past experience, that I could work in full sympathy and harmony with my brethren in the Syria Mission, although occupying in some respects an independent position. I feel sure, moreover, that there is work of a useful and important character open to me in preparing religious and biblical literature in the Arabic language, and perhaps also in rendering some further service in my old department of instruction in the Theological Seminary.

Another reason which influences me to tender this resignation at this time is that the way may be open for the Board to regularly appoint some one to take my place in Syria, and that the Mission may feel free to make such an adjustment of forces in the field as my continued absence calls for.

My relations with the Board and its Secretaries have been most happy during the twenty-three years of my service, and I am more deeply impressed than

ever before with the importance and dignity of the blessed work in which it is our common privilege to share.

This step should not be regarded as a resignation from the work of Foreign Missions, but simply as a request in view of Providential circumstances for the severance of those formal relations to the Board which involve mutual obligations, while at the same time the spirit of loyalty and, so far as is practicable, of willing co-operation also, remains in full sway over my heart and life. I remain with great respect,

Yours most faithfully,

**JAMES S. DENNIS.**

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The Board of Foreign Missions, upon receipt of the above letter, passed the following resolutions :

**ACTION OF THE BOARD.**

*Resolved*, That the resignation of Rev. James S. Dennis, D. D., as a salaried missionary of this Board be accepted ; but that in view of his expected return to Syria as a volunteer missionary he be requested to retain an honorary connection

with the Board, and that he and the Syria Mission be free to adjust the details of practical co-operation in a way which shall be mutually satisfactory, no obligation being imposed by the Board upon either party.

*Resolved*, That in taking this action, which is done only at Dr. Dennis's own request, the Board would record its very high appreciation of the faithful and efficient service which for twenty-three years he has rendered to the Syrian Mission and to all Christian Missions in the Arabic-speaking world. In connection with his work in the Theological Seminary at Beirut he has prepared and published in Arabic a systematic course of study in Theology embracing two volumes of 500 pages each. This work is now the standard used not only in our own Seminary, but also in that of the United Presbyterian Mission in Egypt, and in the American Board's Seminary in Eastern Turkey. The Board would express its hope that Dr. and Mrs. Dennis may long be spared to advance still farther the cause of Christ in the Arabic-speaking world.

## COPY OF LETTER ADDRESSED TO THE SYRIA MISSION.

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NEW YORK, *January 18th, 1892.*

TO THE SYRIA MISSION.

Dear Brethren :—I send you enclosed a copy of my resignation as handed in to the Board of Foreign Missions, and the action of the Board upon the same. The precise meaning of this action is given in the letter of resignation. In one sense of the word it may be called a resignation, but in another and important sense it should not be considered as such, since it is not an absolute or final separation from Syria and our work there.

It has been evident to me for some time past that my connection with the work in Syria must be more or less interrupted as time goes on, and that my service would of necessity be fragmentary. I cannot now determine with any certainty when I shall be able to return. In view of this embarrassment, and the improbability of my being able to render continuous service in future years, it has seemed to me wise and expedient to step aside and open the way for another and more reliable man to take my place. One purpose, therefore, in this

resignation is to open the door for the Board to appoint another missionary to Syria, and also to give the Mission full freedom in adjusting the work to be done in Syria without reference to me. I am still, as you will see, an honorary missionary of the Board, and if the way opens I expect to return to Syria to enter upon some work which may be useful to the cause of Christ in that land. There is much to be done in the preparation of religious literature. Several departments of biblical and theological study are as yet untouched in Arabic. We need an Old Testament History and also commentaries on the Old Testament books.

If I am in Beirut I might help in giving instruction in the Theological Seminary without being responsible for the supervision of it. I am sure, judging from my past experience of happy and unbroken fraternal relations with my associates, that while my function as a missionary would be in a certain sense independent, yet it would also be in a real sense in full sympathy and practical co-operation with the Mission. All difficulty can be avoided, I think, by my saying frankly that I do not consider the Mission under any obligations to reserve or set apart any special work for me, but just as free to go on as if I were not to return. When I come back I can pick up something which needs to be



done, and so be a help so far as I can, and I should hope in lines which the Mission could cordially approve.

I now wish to resign my position as Principal of the Theological Seminary and also as Professor, and to thank the Mission for the confidence they have given me in appointing me to these responsible duties. I hope that much of the work I have done in this sphere of service may be among the things which remain and which cannot be shaken. My great aim in all that I did in the department of theological instruction was to honor and glorify God's word and Christ's work, and give to the students the whole truth in its comprehensiveness, and with as full an insight as possible into its higher harmonies.

I am not writing a farewell letter to the Mission, as I hope to be among you all again, and in this hope Mrs. Dennis shares, and I am sure she joins with me most cordially in Christian greetings to all our loved circle. We would like also to send our kind salutations to all native friends. We have both shared most keenly in the sorrows which have come to all hearts in our Syrian family, and to some with such crushing weight. We pray for God's grace to you all, and for His blessing on the work in which we still hope once more to have an active share.

Yours most sincerely,

**JAMES S. DENNIS.**

To the above letter the Syria Mission have sent in response the following minute :

### **ACTION OF THE SYRIA MISSION.**

BEIRUT, *February 16th, 1892.*

The committee appointed by the Syria Mission at its annual meeting, February, 1892, to prepare a minute with regard to Dr. Dennis's resignation of his office as a Missionary of the Presbyterian Board, present the following report :

The members of the Syria Mission have learned with deep emotion of the decision which Dr. Dennis has felt constrained to make, that he can no longer undertake regular and continuous labor as a missionary in Syria owing to providential circumstances beyond his control.

But the deep regret we feel at his resignation of his regular missionary office is alleviated by the hope we are encouraged to entertain that he may be able to devote a considerable portion of his time, in years to come, in preparing religious literature in Syria.

The four large volumes he has already prepared in Arabic, two on Theology, one on Christian Evidences, and one on Biblical Interpretation, making an aggregate of more than 1,700 pages, octavo, constitute an invaluable contribution

to biblical and theological literature, in addition to his published sermons and historical chart of Old Testament History.

We would cordially invite Dr. Dennis to make such preparations as he finds practicable while in America to complete his Commentaries already begun on Isaiah, Jonah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea, and his Old Testament History, and to continue his labors in preparing Commentaries on such other parts of the Old Testament as may be agreed upon by the Mission in the future.

We would also express the confident hope that he will be able to give instruction to future theological classes during his sojourn in Syria in years to come.

It gives us pleasure to place on record our warm appreciation of Dr. Dennis's labors as a Missionary and a teacher of young men, our affection for him and his family, and our strong desire that both he and his wife may spend as much of their time as possible in the future as associates with us in the blessed work to which our Lord has called us in this land.

Signed on behalf of the Mission.

Committee, { HENRY H. JESSUP,  
                  { W. W. EDDY.

